

Brother, Can You Spare a Note?

"I didn't mention the caper in my autobiography. I was too ashamed of my own part in it."

It may be that the trouble with Nixon and Reagan, the -gate presidents, is that neither has a song associated with them. Both had *Hail to the Chief* played wherever they went but that's the prerogative of every President.

Franklin Roosevelt had several songs. There was *Franklin D. Roosevelt Jones*, also *The Face on the Dime* from a GI show entitled *Call Me Mister* and FDR's campaign song, *Happy Days Are Here Again*.

Truman's campaign song was (what else?) *I'm Just Wild About Harry*. This wasn't composed for Truman; it was written by Eubie Blake when Truman was still a child. (Blake said, on his hundredth birthday, "If I'd have known I was going to live this long I'd have taken better care of myself.")

The Lerner/Loewe song *Camelot* was written for a show but became so associated with the Kennedy presidency that people still get misty-eyed when it's played.

Huey Long, at one time a potential Presidential candidate, and the subject of Robert Penn Warren's novel, *All the King's Men*, had a campaign song *Every Man a King*, which celebrated Long's plan involving a gift of \$5,000 to every US citizen. This was in the early Thirties and may have been the going price for kings.

I suppose Reagan could have one, if he sang it himself:

*O, I sit there glued to the TV set
Watching Ollie-wollie doodle all the day.*

Charles Lindbergh had *Lucky Lindy* after his solo flight across the Atlantic, though this tended to fade out after he became an isolationist with anti-Jewish overtones, and campaigned on the America First platform, to keep the US out of WWII. America First never developed a song.

Herbert Hoover was forever associated with *Brother, Can You Spare a Dime*, a fine song but a lousy vote-getter. Boulder Dam was officially Hoover Dam and the President opened the project but, to Hoover's chagrin, it remained *Boulder Dam* to the public. He rejected a suggestion that the problem could easily be solved if he

would just change his name to Herbert Boulder.

There were some dire US war songs such as *We're Gonna Have to Slap/The Dirty Little Jap*. Another, *I Am an American*, had this verse:

Although I'm not a lad like my brother or my Dad

I'll shout, wherever I may be

I am an American, I am every part of me.

Yet another was called *God's Country* and included the lines:

Hi there, Yankee

Give out with a great big "thank 'ee"

You're in God's country.

The best of them was probably *Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition* by Frank Loesser, who grew out of that phase in time to write the score of *Guys & Dolls*.

Which brings me to The Deal. My best friend, E. J. Kahn Jr., a regular contributor to *The New Yorker*, was in the army as a warrant officer. His colonel, knowing of Jack Kahn's showbiz contacts, commissioned him to find a song for the infantry. The Marines had a song *From the Halls of Montezuma* sung, usually, by men who didn't know who the hell Montezuma was except that he seemed to have some halls. The Air Force had *Up We Go, Into the Wild Blue Yonder* (what's a yonder?) and cynical airmen would shout "CRRRAAASH!" after the first line. The infantry, so far, had zilch. There was Irving Berlin's *Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning*, written during the First World War but, if anything, it was a hymn of hate to the infantry. An anthem it wasn't.

Jack approached Frank Loesser, who was a private in the Signal Corps and loathing every minute of it. Frank, a night-club type, liked to sleep late and in Signals he had to be present at Reveille every morning. (He could have been the hero of Berlin's song.) Jack Kahn won Loesser's enthusiastic co-operation in transferring to the infantry on the promise (read "bribe") that if he would guarantee to produce an infantry song, he could live at home and sleep as late as he liked. Kahn gave Frank a list of all the infantrymen who had so far been awarded the

Medal of Honour (or, to be fair, Honor). Most of them had names on a par with the Yugoslav tennis player, Slobodan Zivojinovic, but at the bottom of the list Frank found the perfect WASP name, Rodger Young. Young had been killed in New Guinea while saving the lives of fellow-soldiers. Loesser wrote *The Ballad of Rodger Young* in two days.

Now to find a hook on which to hang the song. Jack Kahn knew that I was about to go to the South Pacific on a USO tour to entertain troops, with Jack Benny, Carole Landis and Martha Tilton. This is what he came up with. I, once in New Guinea, coming across the story of Rodger Young, would be impelled to write a letter about it to *Life* magazine. Kahn had already arranged with *Life*'s managing editor, C. D. Jackson, that the letter would be printed. Frank Loesser, on reading my letter, would be so moved that *The Ballad of Rodger Young*, would be spontaneously inspired.

I thought the idea was corny and turned it down. Loesser, who thought his song was quite good enough to make it on its own without such gimmicks, was equally against the idea. Kahn, by emotional appeals to our patriotism, made us change our minds. I went to New Guinea, and, with hate in my heart, wrote the god-damned letter. The rest is hysteria. Remember, the song had been written before I ever left for New Guinea.

When I returned from the South Pacific, there was a big publicity push – interviews with Frank Loesser and me, both of us lying like crazy. The song had a lot of air time and was even recorded by the DePauw Infantry Chorus. I'll bet it's in the BBC record library right now.

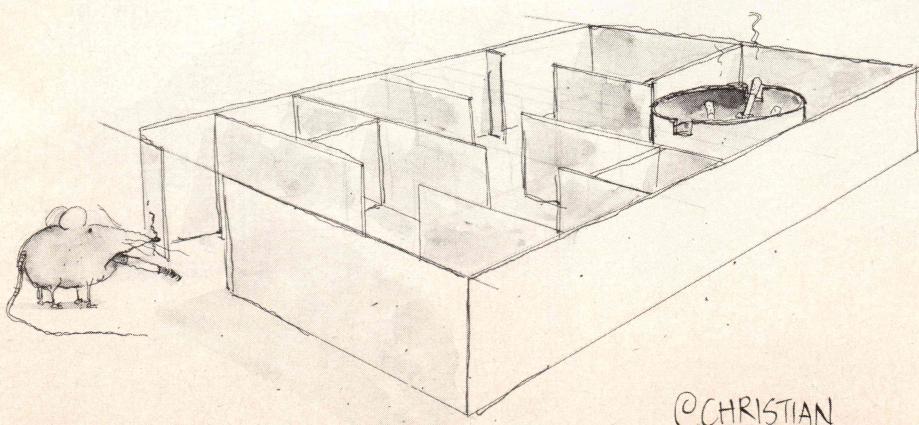
It was a total flop.

The public had taken *Praise the Lord* and especially the bathetic *God Bless America* to its collective bosom but refused to find bosom room for *Rodger Young*. Jack still wouldn't give up. He wrote an article for the *Saturday Evening Post* about the way Rodger Young had become such a legend that Frank Loesser had been moved to compose his masterpiece. Jack thoughtfully omitted the part *Dirty Tricks* had played. However, the effort was wasted. Nothing could get *The Ballad of Rodger Young* off the ground.

I didn't mention the Rodger Young caper in my autobiography, I was too ashamed of my own part in it. However, considering that my book was called *It Ain't Necessarily So*, I could well have included the whole sordid story. Still, better late, etc and you know what they say about confession. I feel better already.

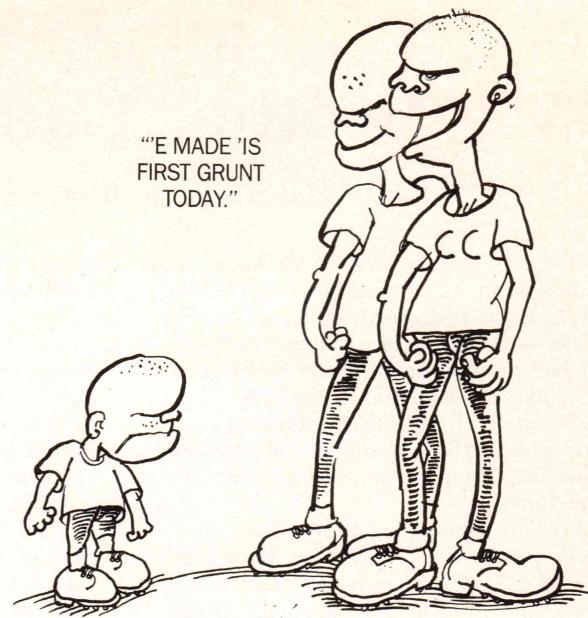
Addendum: A year later I received a call from my draft board. I was a card-carrying coward and wanted no part of the Armed Services. The night before I was to go before the board I dined with Frank Loesser. All through dinner I was nervous, distract, and Loesser knew why. He patted my hand.

"Don't worry, kid," he said, "you're safe. If they take you it means the Japs are in the lobby."

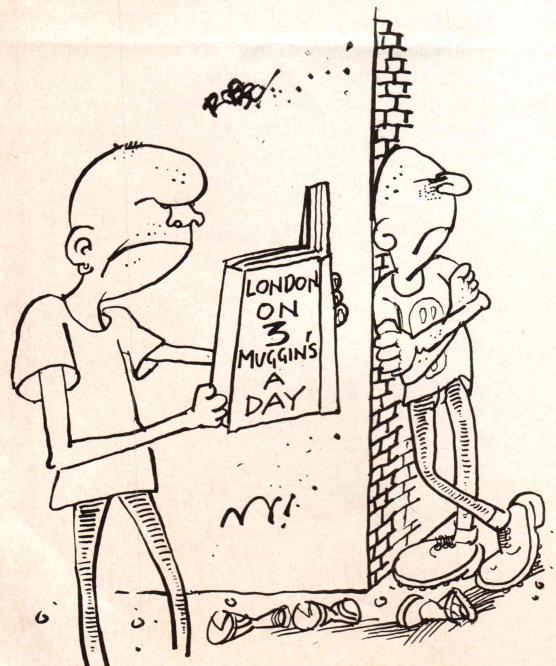
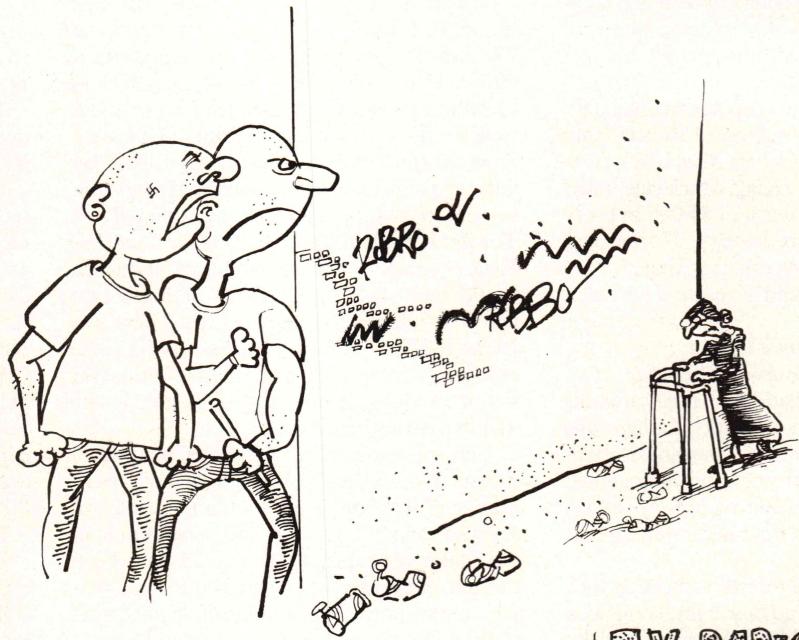




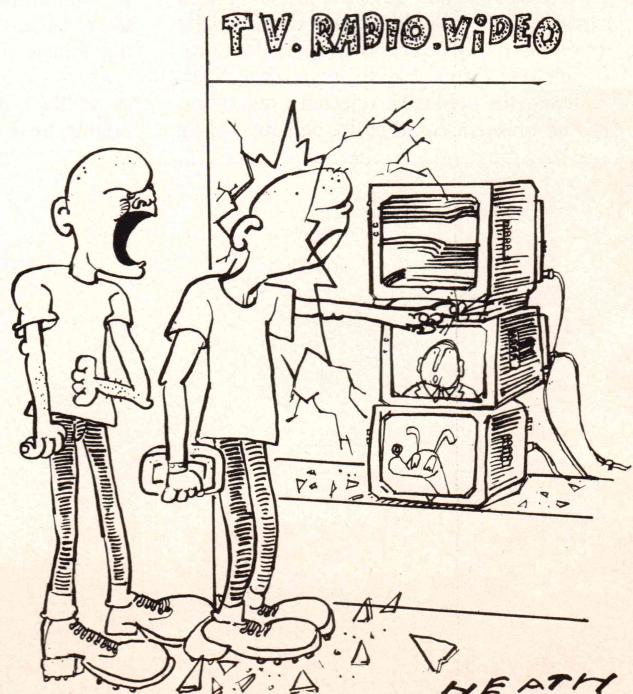
"E MADE 'IS FIRST GRUNT TODAY."



"WATCH OUT FOR 'ER – SHE COULD GET YOU WIV HER WALKIN' FRAME!"



"PUT ON THE A-TEAM!"



Larry Adler and Pals Pay the Peabody a Visit

NYT - 4-23-85

Special to The New York Times

BALTIMORE, April 21 — Larry Adler, the self-exiled harmonica virtuoso, returned to his hometown here Saturday night for a benefit concert appearance at the Peabody Conservatory with a former colleague in the Baltimore Mouth Organ Band, Lieut. Gen. Edward L. Rowny, the Reagan Administration's special adviser in Washington on arms control.

For Mr. Adler, 71 years old, it was an evening of nostalgia and music marking the 90th anniversary of the Peabody Preparatory School, the division of the noted music school here that reaches out to gifted youngsters — and which expelled the irrepressible Mr. Adler in 1936, when he was a piano student.

Instead of playing the assigned Waltz in A minor by Grieg at a student recital almost 50 years ago, he substituted "Yes, We Have No Ba-

nanas." Saturday night, Mr. Adler asked Virginia Strohecker, the retired Peabody teacher who expelled him, to rise in the audience. "I owe so much to you," he said. "Without you, I might have stayed and graduated."

Honorary Graduates

Mr. Adler and his friend, the jazz pianist Ellis Larkins — who was his accompanist for the jazz and pop program that closed Saturday night's concert with three curtain calls — each received honorary certificates of graduation from Peabody.

Mr. Larkins, who is black, could not formally enroll in "Peabody Prep" in 1939 because it was segregated then, but he studied privately with some of the Peabody teachers. He went on to study at the Juilliard School in New York for a career that made him accompanist for Ella Fitzgerald, Sara Vaughan, Mildred Bailey and others.

As Mr. Larkins received his diploma Saturday night, the pianist's wife, Crystal, called out from the audience of 800: "It took all these years, Ellis, but you made it!"

According to Mr. Adler, Mr. Larkins was the only well-known accompanist who would agree to appear with him in 1959 at his first performance in the United States, at the Village Gate, after being labeled a "Communist performer" by followers of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy and exiling himself to London in 1949.

In his recent autobiography, "It Ain't Necessarily So," so far published only in his adopted country of Britain, Mr. Adler denies he was ever a Communist.

General Rowny, who was replaced by President Reagan last January as the chief United States strategic arms negotiator with the Russians at Geneva, spoke Saturday night of his social experiences with the Soviet representatives at the arms talks.

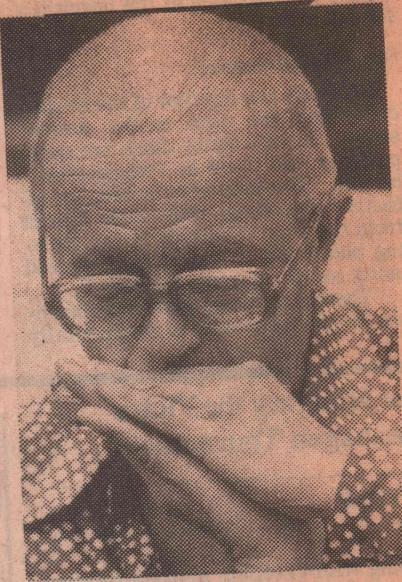
On the stage briefly with Mr. Adler at the Peabody's Miriam A. Fried-

Little Orchestra Society In Liebermann Premiere

The Little Orchestra Society will open its subscription series at Alice Tully Hall on April 29 at 8 P.M. with a concert conducted by its music director, Dino Anagnost.

The program will include the American premiere of Rolf Liebermann's "Liaison," for cello, piano and orchestra, with the cellist Siegfried Palm, for whom it was written, and the pianist Barbara Nissman.

The chamber orchestra will also perform C.P.E. Bach's Symphony in C major, Zoltán Kodály's "Dances of Galánta" and David Diamond's Music for Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," which was commissioned by the Little Orchestra Society in 1947. Tickets are \$8 to \$25, and are available through the Alice Tully Hall box office (362-1911) or Centercharge (874-6770).



The New York Times

Larry Adler

berg Concert Hall, the general acknowledged that, with his own harmonica, he had made the Russian negotiators laugh and dance aboard a Lake Geneva steamboat cruise. He had played "Meadowlands," the familiar, sad Russian theme that used to accompany newsreel scenes of marching Soviet troops.

Mr. Adler, who told a reporter that his political activity recently has been limited to working in England for Gary Hart's bid to become the Democratic nominee for President and against apartheid in South Africa, made only one obliquely political remark from the stage. As he and General Rowny received applause for their "Russian music" harmonica duet, Mr. Adler said: "I don't know why they need guided missiles when they have us."

Feld Ballet Benefit

Peter Allen will appear with the Feld Ballet in "A Gala Gallimaufry of Fancy Footwork and Foofaraw," a benefit for the company on Thursday at the Joyce Theater.



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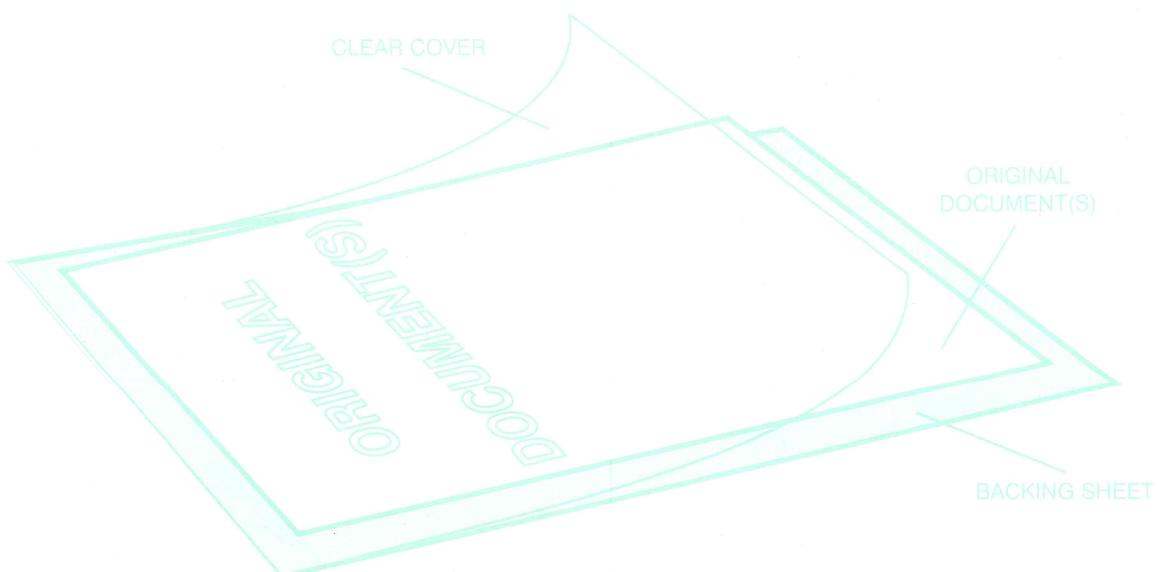
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Music: Adler and Draper

Reunion of Harmonica Virtuoso and Tap Dancer Is Warmly Received

By DONAL HENAHAN

Once they went together as naturally as Lunt and Fontanne or cheese and crackers, but until they came onstage Sunday night at Carnegie Hall, Larry Adler and Paul Draper had not performed here as a team for 27 years. And even now, with their once-controversial political views long ago faded as a hot issue, it has taken the unlikely aegis of the Third Annual Harpsichord Festival to bring the remarkable team back to a New York stage.

The middle-aged and those older will remember that Mr. Adler, the harmonica virtuoso, and Mr. Draper, the celebrated tap dancer, were accused of leftist leanings in the nineteen-fifties and were placed on show-business and other blacklists in the wake of hearings by the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Their careers, though unquestionably hampered, are still very much alive, and they were greeted like returning heroes by the Carnegie Hall audience.

Mr. Adler came on first and received an extended noisily happy standing ovation, and the demonstration was repeated a few minutes later for Mr. Draper. Possibly owing to the odd sponsorship of the program, the audience was not large, but it hung appreciatively on every note and every tap.

Mr. Adler, as ever the magician with his severely limited instrument, coaxed an extraordinary variety of colors and dynamic nuances out of it in such pieces as Debussy's "Prelude of the Afternoon of a Faun," Bartók's "Romanian Dances" and Bloch's "Nigun." He could give, for example, an amazing imitation of violin harmonica in the Bartók, or vividly suggest the oboe in a movement from Mozart's Oboe Quartet. A truncated version of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" suffered somewhat from a running debate between the John Coleman, pianist and the page-turner over what was being cut, a distraction that even Mr. Adler's hypnotic skill could not overcome.

Mr. Draper's dancing remains impeccably musical

and—at age 66—impressively limber. He tired noticeably in his own unaccompanied Sonata for Tap Dancer, but seemed barely to be touching the floor at times in a Prelude and a Gigue by Bach. One thinks, naturally, of Astaire or Bolger when Mr. Draper is in full flight, but his style is so intense and serious that comparisons are not really to the point.

The big nostalgic moment, however, was when the famous partners came out together in the Siciliano from Bach's Sonata in E flat for flute and harpsichord. With Frances Cole at the keyboard and with Mr. Adler's harmonica deputizing for flute, Mr. Draper danced his own tightly controlled, rather dreamstruck Siciliano.

All this had less to do with the harpsichord than one might expect at the key concert of a 10-day festival celebrating the instrument, but the reunion of the two artists might have justified almost any irrelevance. Miss Cole, who organized the festival and persuaded Mr. Adler and Mr. Draper to contribute their services, also accompanied the violinist Aaron Rosand in Tartini's "Devil's Trill," a performance that gave evidence of some under-rehearsal but made plain Mr. Rosand's elegant tone and fleet left hand.

The Canadian duo of Joyce Rawlings and Donald Stagg played a group of modern dances on a strange-looking Sabathil instrument, a "double-ended harpsichord" said to be the only one of its kind. It is two harpsichords built, for some arcane reason, within a single case. Not the least of the concert's peculiarities was the amplification of the harpsichord, a device one would think enthusiasts of this instrument might detest on principle.

The evening concerts scheduled this week by the festival at the College of Mount St. Vincent in Riverdale will be given instead at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, with one exception: Saturday night's concert will remain at the college. The time is 8:30 P.M.



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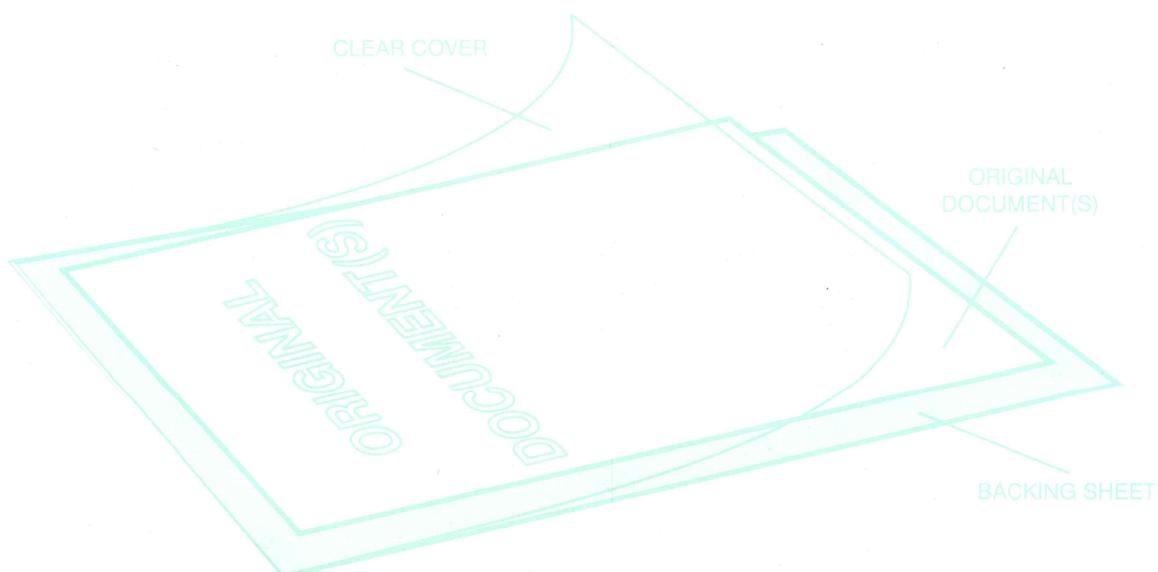
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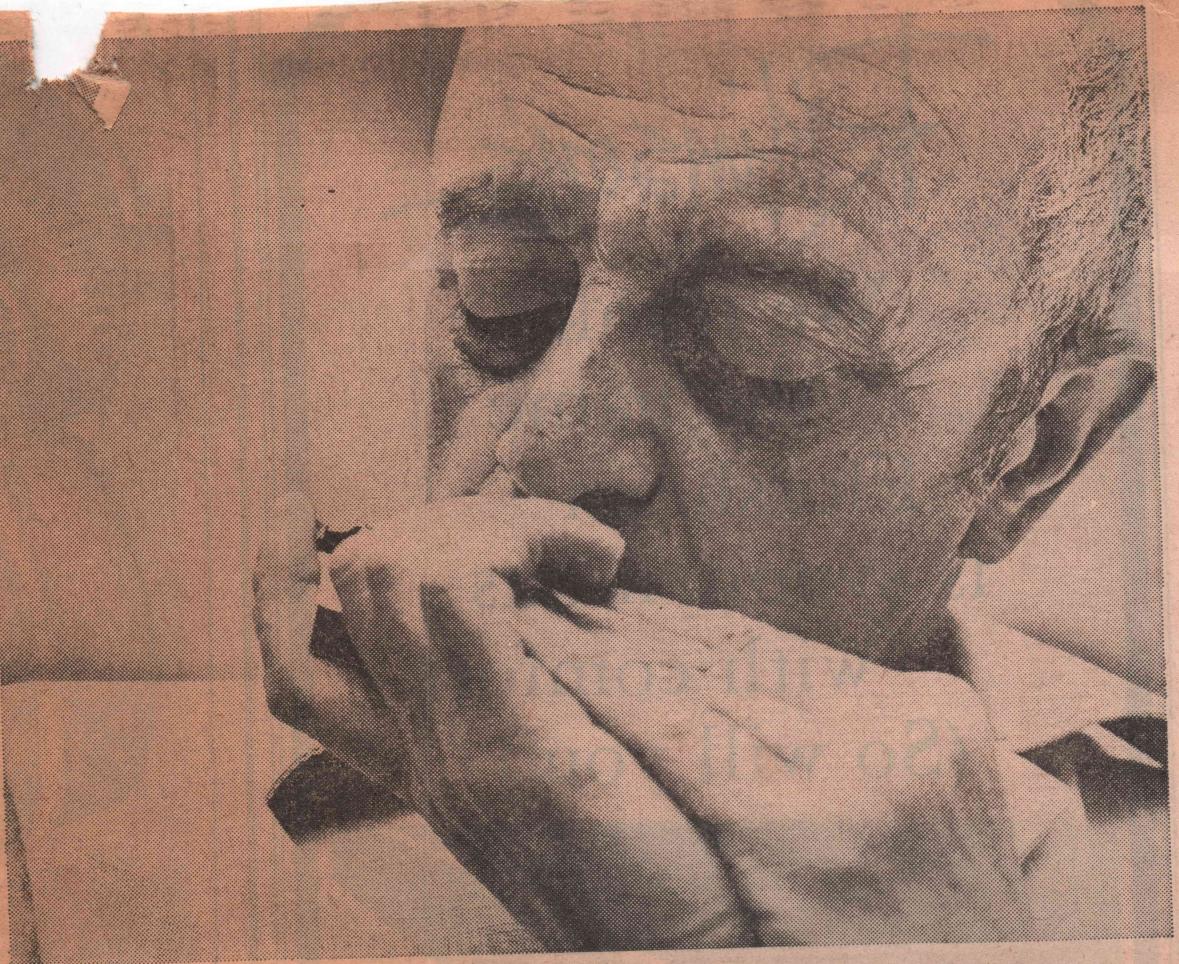
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COMEBACK—Harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler plans first major U.S. concert tour since the

'40s. Blacklisted, he left U.S. in 1949 and has long tried to come home again professionally.

Times photo by Kathleen Ballard

BLACKLISTED MUSICIAN RETURNS APR 29 1976

U.S. Rediscovering Larry Adler

BY BARBARA ISENBERG

Times Staff Writer

bio

Alfred Hitchcock was making his first appearance on NBC's Tonight Show, and following him on stage would not be easy. So as he watched Hitchcock on a studio television and waited his turn, Larry Adler sat perched on the edge of his seat looking nervous.

Never mind that 30 years ago Adler was one of the biggest names in show business. Never mind that critics still talked of him as the harmonica virtuoso, that major composers had written special concertos for him, that he'd given command performances for three kings of England and two U.S. Presidents. The Tonight Show is very important professionally and, 62 now, Larry Adler has been trying to come home for a long time.

First accused of pro-communism, then nearly wiped out financially waging a libel suit against an accuser, Adler left the United States in 1949 for England. He had spent several successful years there in the '30s and says he'd always been better known there. His U.S. appearances have been relatively rare—he last played Los Angeles in 1961—and Tonight Show appearances last month and last week will launch his first major U.S. concert tour since the '40s.

In England, as in America, Larry Adler made the har-

monica a respectable musical instrument. Playing everything from Bach and Bartok to Gershwin and Ellington, he gave the mouth organ what the prestigious Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians refers to as "a new lease of life."

That kind of acceptance didn't come easily, Adler stresses. Before Grove's Dictionary became aware of his existence, he says, people were "quite nasty about the mouth organ, calling the sound excruciatingly bad and one of the worst noises devised by man." Even Aram Khachaturian thought lightly of his instrument, says Adler, recalling how the Russian composer told him small boys played the garmushka on street corners and he'd never before heard anyone play music on one.

Adler remembers that Khachaturian said he'd write him a concerto but never did. Many other composers did, however, including Vaughan Williams, Malcolm Arnold, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Benjamin and Gordon Jacob. He says, too, that Robert Russell Bennett has twice rescored Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" for mouth organ and symphony orchestra; Adler performed the first Bennett rescore in 1943 and hopes to perform the second, written

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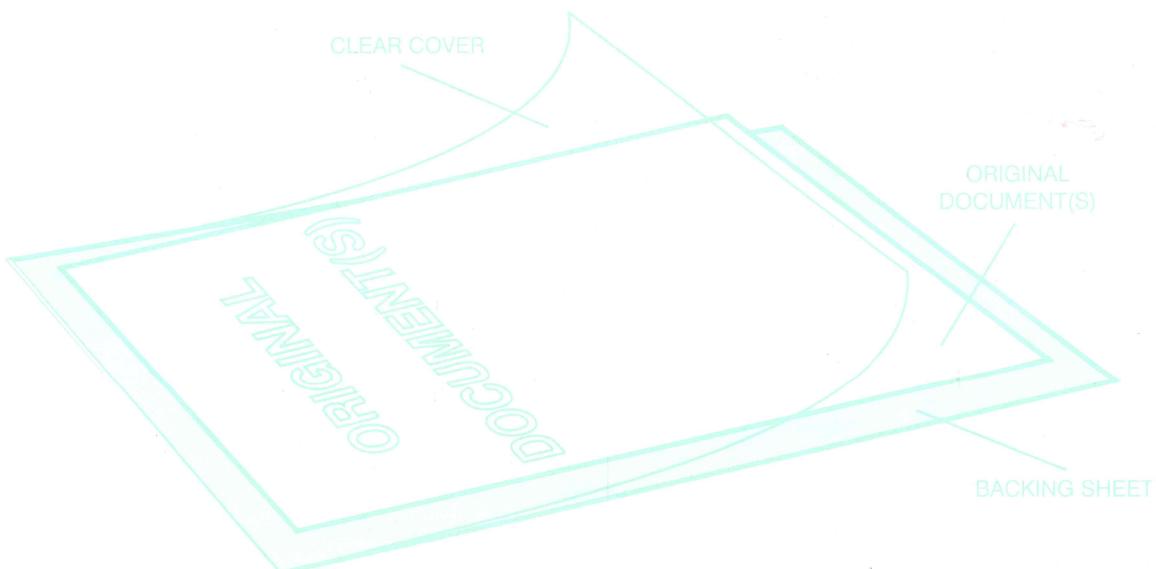
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U.S. Rediscovering Larry Adler

Continued from First Page

last summer, sometime this year.

Actually, it wasn't until composer Jean Berger brought Adler the "Caribbean Concerto for Harmonica" he'd commissioned that Adler learned to read music. Writing about Adler in the '40s, retired Times critic Philip K. Scheuer remembered back still further to a skinny 19-year-old playing by ear, picking up melodies from phonograph records and improvising with them.

Dismissed from the Peabody School of Music for being "totally lacking in ear," Baltimore-born Adler taught himself to play the harmonica and at 13 won a harmonica contest playing Beethoven's Minuet in G. (His brother, Jerry, also a professional harmonica player, won the same contest five years later playing the same minuet.) Then he took his mouth organ—"the difference between a mouth organ and a harmonica is that people think it sounds grander to call it a harmonica"—and set about proving its potential as a music- and money-maker.

There he was at the Chicago Theater, he recalls, when his next four weeks were canceled. What could he do but send a wire to Sid Grauman in Hollywood saying THE WORLD'S GREATEST HARMONICA PLAYER IS AT THE CHICAGO THEATER and sign it with the name of the Chicago Theater's head man, Louie Lipstone. The next day, he went to confess what he'd done and found Lipstone talking on the telephone. Lipstone spotted Adler: "Grauman says I sent him a wire. I didn't do that. Did you?" Adler admitted he had. Putting his hand over the mouthpiece, Lipstone said, "Why, you little bastard." Then, talking into the phone, he said, "Yeah, Sid, the kid's great."

75 Concerts a Year

Adler played Grauman's for three weeks, then booked his friend, dancer Paul Draper, in next. The two had met in 1933 at Radio City Music Hall—producer Samuel (Roxy) Rothafel had thrown them together to make efficient use of a Vincente Minnelli set, Adler deadpans—and while they didn't start working together as a team until several years later, "we kept each other working. I got him Grauman's; he got me the Palmer House."

Adler and Draper were doing 75 U.S. concerts a year in the 40s, says Adler, interrupted only by Adler's trips overseas to entertain American troops. (Adler did shows in Africa, the Pacific and Europe with Jack Benny—he's currently writing a review of the comedian's biography for the New York Review of Books—and later played for British troops in Germany and Korea.) Playing New York's City Center during Christmas week, 1948, Adler says, the two men reportedly grossed \$52,000, a sum he claims might have been the season's highest Broadway gross.

He alone grossed \$200,000 in 1948, boasts Adler, before it all started to come apart. Then a series of politically controversial actions culminated with Adler and Draper being blacklisted and, following a lengthy libel suit, nearly broke as well.

Adler was one of many prominent Hollywood personalities who both joined the Committee for the First Amendment and represented it on a chartered flight to Washington in 1947 to protest House Un-American Activities Committee hearings. According to Adler, the hearings closed

down, the press labeled the First Amendment Committee a Communist-front organization and the American Legion soon began putting their names on a blacklist. Many of the entertainers made public statements apologizing for having been involved with the organization, says Adler, "and we who did not look suspicious."

A year later, Adler supported Henry Wallace's presidential campaign against Harry Truman. "I was quite aware that Communists had taken over his campaign," he says, "but just because they were for him was no reason for me to be against him."

It was, he thinks, the Wallace support as much as anything else that led a Greenwich, Conn., housewife to write a highly publicized letter protesting an Adler-Draper engagement locally. In December, 1948, Mrs. Hester R. McCullough charged the two men were pro-Communist and a month later they filed a \$200,000 libel suit against her.

Their attorney said in court that they'd lost many thousands of dollars worth of bookings, and Adler testified that he couldn't get work in the United States. (Both men denied Mrs. McCullough's charges, although Adler did testify he'd done shows for the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee.) All their contracts were canceled, says Adler, including major engagements at Chicago's Palmer House, New York's Persian Room and Houston's Shamrock Hotel; the Persian Room and Palmer House appearances would have meant income of \$2,000 a week, he adds.

Canceled in Las Vegas

It wasn't until May, 1950, that the suit ended with a hung jury. Adler tried to make a comeback in 1952, playing New York's Town Hall to "terrific notices," but he received no return engagement. In 1953, he says, he flew over from England to play Las Vegas—the first American job he'd had in a while—only to learn the Sands had canceled his engagement because an Illinois American Legion official had cabled the hotel that "I'd never given satisfactory answers to Red charges."

The pressure didn't seem to let up. In 1956 and 1957, he says, his passport was taken away because he was charged with being a member of a Communist cell. That was only cleared up when it was found to be a case of mistaken identity; another man named Adler had been charged. Adler maintains his U.S. citizenship but "that more than anything made me decide I would live permanently in England where such things didn't happen."

Adler told his Tonight Show audience last week that while he composed the score for a 1953 film called "Genevieve," his name was pulled off the credits just before it opened in the United States. Even when the score was nominated for an Oscar the following year, he said, the conductor of the orchestra was named instead of the composer. The film is still shown here without that credit, he told guest host John Davidson, "but I did it. I wrote the music and I'm very proud of it."

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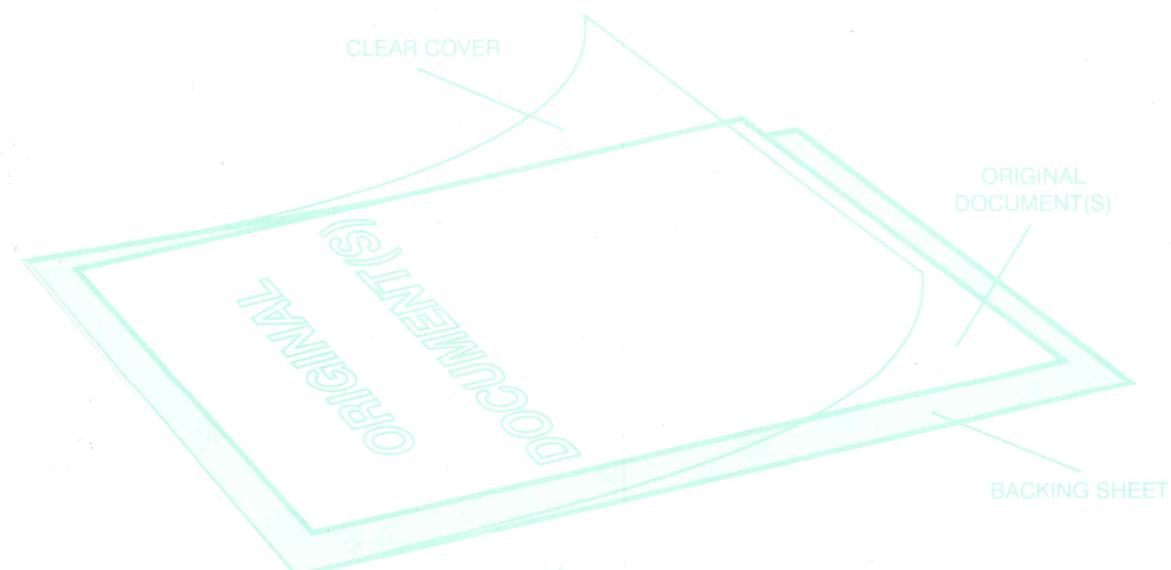
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Very proud of a lot of things, Adler is quite shameless about relating everything nice everyone ever said about him. Take Jack Benny's remark about Adler's sense of humor, for instance: "He thought I was the funniest man in the world—he really believed it—and he made George Burns sick telling him all the time." And Busby Berkeley "once said I had the most beautiful hands since Garbo."

Sure it's been hard, says Adler, but he's always made a living with his harmonica. He even attempted a U.S. comeback in 1959, urged on by friend James Thurber "who was outraged I couldn't play in my own country." Adler played the Village Gate in New York, Mr. Kelly's in Chicago, the hungry i in San Francisco. "It looked as if things were moving," he says, "but in fact nothing moved."

The musician tried returning here on and off, but mostly he explored new avenues and developed other old ones. He wrote scores for films and documentaries, helped produce and narrate a BBC special on George Gershwin, made a dozen record albums. More than a decade ago he wrote a book called "Jokes and How to Tell Them." Now he's putting together an autobiography, "From Hand to Mouth," and doing literary, drama and even restaurant reviews for various British publications. (Along the way, he was married twice to British women and fathered four children. He is now engaged to a third British woman, 29-year-old Lady Selina Hastings, daughter of the Earl of Huntington.

'Just Getting Back'

Then, last summer, things started to pick up here. He and Paul Draper were together again on a U.S. stage for the first time in 27 years when they played in a harpsichord concert at Carnegie Hall. Adler stayed on to do a spot at New York's Rainbow Grill. He also did the Today Show and AM America on that trip and, apparently not disliking the exposure, notified the Tonight Show he was available. He sent Tonight producer Fred De Cordova, with whom he worked in 1940, a note he'd be in town in March—"We leaped to have him," says De Cordova—then another note regarding last week's visit. Between Tonight Show appearances, he did concerts in Canada, New York and Florida.

"I'm just getting back into U.S. show business now," he says, talking of his engagement at Chicago's Tango restaurant these next four weeks and a stop at The Bottom Line in New York before heading home to London for the summer. Next fall, he says, he'll be playing concerts in Baltimore, Lansing, Minneapolis and Philadelphia.

Alone in front of the Tonight Show's gold curtain, a slight figure with sad eyes and short gray hair, Adler is playing piano with his left hand, harmonica with his right. Moving smoothly from "Summertime" to "It Ain't Necessarily So," he fans the harmonica with one hand, then the other, making sounds one could never imagine would come from a harmonica. It is very quiet as he plays, and when he is done the Tonight Show orchestra applauds along with the audience.





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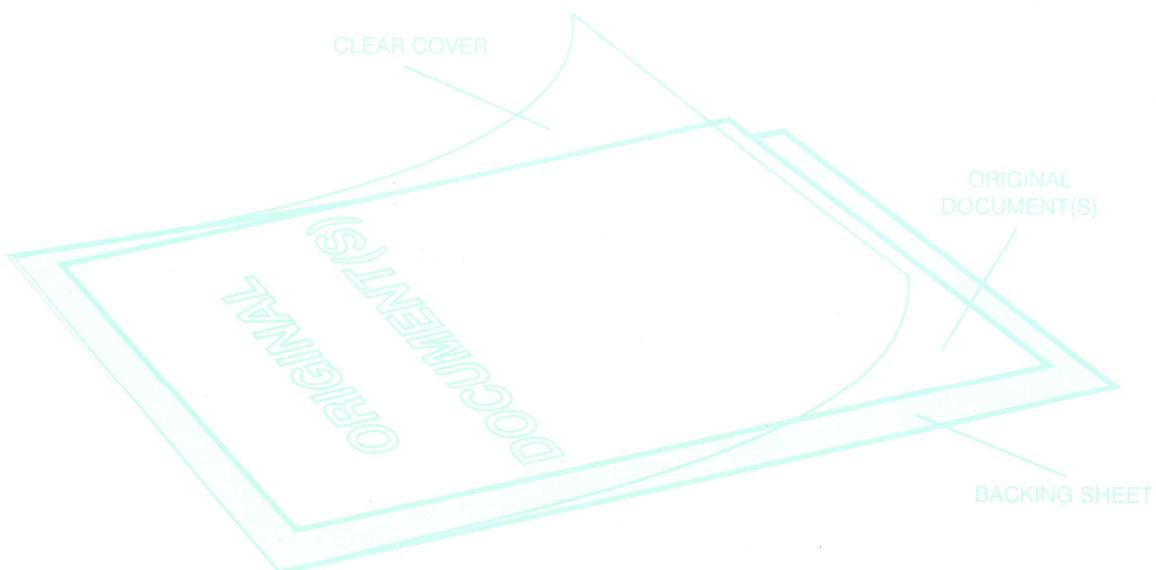
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